

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **GROW SMARTER PIVOTS FUNDING TO SUPPORT ST. PETE DURING COVID-19**

*Collaborative response efforts are based on community needs and will provide immediate support to businesses and residents of St. Petersburg*

**ST. PETERSBURG, FLA. - April 27, 2020** - Grow Smarter St. Petersburg, an equitable economic development initiative based at the St. Petersburg Chamber of Commerce and primarily funded by the Foundation for a Healthy St. Petersburg, will be redirecting an estimated \$151,741 of awarded funds towards COVID-19 relief efforts in the community.

Grow Smarter conducted a Community Needs Assessment in early April, which included nearly 200 online survey responses from local businesses as well as input from Grow Smarter's steering committee and community leaders across the business, faith, nonprofit, and government sectors. Based on this needs assessment, Grow Smarter designed its COVID-19 response in partnership with the Foundation for a Healthy St. Petersburg, the Greenhouse, St. Pete Chamber, St. Petersburg Economic Development Corporation, One Community, SPC, St. Pete Arts Alliance, Warehouse Arts District Association, Deuces Live, and others.

"Our partners at the Foundation challenged us to move quickly to provide relief and restart assistance, and I'm proud of all the organizations that have come together to support these efforts," said Chris Steinocher, President and CEO of the St. Petersburg Chamber of Commerce.

Dr. Tashika Griffith, Grow Smarter 2020 Chair and St. Petersburg College Provost, said of the effort: "Grow Smarter is committed to its mission of equitable economic growth. Understanding the increasing economic challenges and COVID-19's impact on our community, it is imperative that we move quickly to respond to growing needs. The impact of COVID-19 has fortified our efforts and served as an important reminder that we are all in this together."

Grow Smarter's response strategies include:

- Creation of the Business Resiliency Team (BRT) program housed at the Greenhouse. Navigators will give special consideration to minority- and women-owned businesses and sole proprietors.
- Creation of an endowed Grow Smarter Scholarship Program at SPC to support study in the Grow Smarter industry areas.
- Contribution to One Community's #InThisTogether fund, a comprehensive system of support for entrepreneurs and business-owners in South St. Petersburg.
- Resource support in South St. Petersburg including funding one year of GoZone Wi-Fi connectivity on the Deuces Live corridor; support for a Resource & Resiliency Hub located at the Warehouse Arts District Association in partnership with Feeding Tampa Bay, Deuces Live, One Community, and other organizations; and support to the St Pete Arts Alliance for supportive programming.

These efforts are an important step towards keeping St. Pete strong, and will be evaluated after 90 days to determine next steps. To learn more, visit [growsmarterstpete.com/brt](http://growsmarterstpete.com/brt)

***About Grow Smarter***

Grow Smarter is an economic development strategy that aims to reduce gaps by race and place in St. Petersburg. It was created in partnership with the St. Petersburg Area Chamber of Commerce and the City of St. Petersburg. The initiative brings together 90+ organizations for cross-sector collaboration and resource alignment. For more information, visit <https://growsmarterstpete.com>

***About the Foundation for a Healthy St. Petersburg***

The Foundation for a Healthy St. Petersburg is a private foundation working with the communities of Pinellas County to eradicate inequality, achieve health equity, and improve population health. The Foundation inspires and empowers people, organizations, ideas, and relationships to ensure that every person equitably achieves optimal health and well-being.